

VISITS TO DEFENCE BASES/SITES DURING AN ELECTION PERIOD

Senators/Members and Candidates

The following guidance has been prepared in accordance with the *Guidance on Caretaker Conventions June 2013* and in consultation with the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet.

Requesting a visit

1. All requests for a parliamentarian or a candidate for election to visit a Defence establishment for campaign purposes during an election period must be directed by email to the Department of Defence in the first instance via the following email address: Caretaker.Advice@defence.gov.au or, where this is not possible, by phone to the Caretaker Hotline: 02 6265 6222.
2. To ensure the consistent and even-handed application of caretaker guidance on base and establishment visits, the decision on whether to approve a request is coordinated by Mr Tony Corcoran, Assistant Secretary FOI and Information Management, and Ms Liza Stephenson, Director of Ministerial and Parliamentary Liaison Services (DMPLS) within Ministerial and Executive Coordination and Communication (MECC) Division of Defence.
3. MECC Division (DMPLS) will act as the central coordination point for arrangements for visits during the caretaker period and any questions or queries about an intended visit can be discussed with Tony Corcoran (on (02) 6266 4080 or 0405 310162) or Liza Stephenson (tel: 02 6265 4409 or 0424 163 609) or through the Caretaker Hotline.
4. The Department will advise the office of the Minister for Defence of all approved visits.
5. Where possible, a minimum of two working days' notice is to be given to ensure that the visits do not interfere with operational requirements or the normal running of a base. The timing of such visits is at the convenience of the base executive.
6. MECC Division (DMPLS) will notify the Minister's office of decisions on requests and the arrangements relating to each visit, and work closely with the Defence Support Operations Division and the relevant Service Headquarters to approve and coordinate the visit or, if necessary, liaise with the requesting party if the timing or event is not suitable.

Who can visit bases and establishments?

7. Defence guidance for managing non-official visits to premises or facilities during the caretaker period is even-handed in the level of support and assistance provided to representatives from both the Government and Opposition. Subject to the request and approval process:
 - a. Defence Portfolio Ministers and Shadow Ministers (which in this policy includes Parliamentary Secretaries and Shadow Parliamentary Secretaries), the Leaders and Deputy Leaders of both Government and the Opposition are allowed to visit any Defence establishment in an election period;
 - b. Senators, and Senate candidates, are permitted to visit any establishment in their State; and
 - c. Members of, and candidates for election to, the House of Representatives are permitted to visit any Defence establishment in the electorate in which they are

standing. (This includes visits to Defence establishments in neighbouring electorates, where personnel employed at that establishment reside within their electorate.)

Paragraph 7b and c above apply to candidates who belong to other political parties and independents.

What activities can be undertaken?

8. During the election period, Defence bases or establishments can be used for the purposes of campaigning, in addition to official Defence functions. Guidance for both official and non-official visits during an election period is outlined below.

Major party political announcements

9. Defence Portfolio Ministers, Leaders and Deputy Leaders of Government, Opposition and minor parties and party spokespersons on Defence matters may request to visit a Defence base or establishment for the purposes of making an election commitment or other major announcement.

10. To comply with the caretaker conventions, and to avoid any impression that Defence personnel are involved in Government/Opposition/minor parties' policy or activities, imagery of identifiable ADF/APS personnel as part of the audience during policy launches/announcements should be avoided wherever possible.

Familiarisation visits or briefings

11. Parliamentarians and candidates may seek to visit a Defence establishment for the purposes of a familiarisation tour and briefing on the role and functions of the base or establishment.

12. Any briefings that are conducted during a visit will be at the UNCLASSIFIED level. Defence personnel will not express opinions on Government policies, policy options or matters of a party-political nature. Their role in discussion is to provide factual and background information relating to roles, functions and capabilities.

Election campaigning on bases

13. Campaigning for election is an essential element of Australia's political system. Campaign activities by parliamentarians or candidates for election may be conducted within recreational or single-living-quarter areas, and where married quarters are situated within establishment boundaries and are not normally accessible to the public, with the specific approval of the Officer in Charge of the establishment. However, visits for campaigning purposes are not to interfere with the functions of the establishment. For this reason, no campaign activities are to take place within working areas.

14. Officers in Charge might consider whether access to election campaigning might better be facilitated by an area, such as a theatre, being made available out of working hours to parliamentarians or candidates to address personnel attending on a voluntary basis. Security requirements of each particular base and establishment must be adhered to at all times.

15. Where a candidate enters the base for the purpose of addressing off-duty personnel, or for a briefing, officers in charge will advise MECC Division (DMPLS), which will inform the Minister's office and coordinate as required. However, where a candidate simply wishes to enter to distribute election material, the Officer in Charge can give permission for this to occur without recourse to MECC Division.

Polling booths

16. Where polling places are located within establishment boundaries, candidates and their booth workers will be given ready access to the polling places on Election Day and freedom of opportunity to issue how to vote cards and to conduct scrutineering activities.

Official visits during an election campaign

17. For major official functions, such as troop farewells and welcome-home parades, Defence will sponsor and organise an appropriate event in the normal manner. It will generally be appropriate for Government Defence Ministers, their Opposition counterpart, and the member or candidate of both major political parties to be invited.

Media coverage and imagery

18. Accompanying media will be allowed on base during visits to Defence establishments by the Prime Minister, the Opposition Leader, their respective Deputies, the Minister for Defence, the Minister for Defence Materiel, the Minister for Defence Science and Personnel, and the Parliamentary Secretary for Defence, and Opposition counterparts.

19. Media will not generally be allowed to accompany other parliamentarians or candidates for election on to Defence bases. Doorstops should occur outside the base.

20. However, other parliamentarians or candidates are permitted to be accompanied by a small group of advisers which may include a staff member with a camera or a single stills photographer (who may be a press photographer). Candidates should advise their escorts on base that they wish to take a photograph and seek permission to ensure that appropriate security is observed concerning Defence equipment and personnel.

21. Media are permitted on base during official visits or functions hosted by Defence.

Imagery

22. Imagery taken during visits to Defence establishment must not give the impression that Defence personnel are promoting Government/Opposition/minor parties' policy or are involved in political comment/announcements. This would include identifiable ADF/APS personnel being part of the audience during policy launches/announcements.

23. Examples of acceptable imagery of Defence personnel would include:

- a. imagery of Defence personnel greeting or providing a familiarisation tour/briefing to the visitor; and/or
- b. demonstrating the features of Defence equipment in footage that is clearly separate from the filming of the party political proceedings.

Further information

24. Please contact the MECC Division (DMPLS) Caretaker Hotline on (02) 6265 6222 in the first instance.